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Trend full-time employment growth continues

Monthly trend full-time employment increased for the eighth straight month in May 2017, according to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today. Full-time employment grew by a further 19,300 persons, while part-time employment increased by 5,900 persons, underpinning an increase in total employment of 25,200 persons.

"Full-time employment has increased by around 124,000 persons since September 2016, with particular strength over the past five months, at around 20,000 persons per month," said Chief Economist for the ABS, Bruce Hockman.

Over the past year, trend employment increased by 194,200 persons (or 1.6 per cent), which is still below the average year-on-year growth over the past 20 years (1.8 per cent). It has increased since December 2016, when the year-on-year growth was at 0.8 per cent and reflected relatively low employment growth through most of 2016.

The trend monthly hours worked increased by 2.9 million hours (0.2 per cent) to 1,677.7 million hours in May 2017. Most of this increase was hours worked by full-time workers.

The trend unemployment rate in Australia remained at 5.7 per cent in May 2017. The trend underemployment rate, which is a quarterly measure of employed persons wanting more hours, increased from 8.7 per cent to 8.8 per cent between February and May 2017.

"The underemployment rate is an important indicator of the spare capacity of workers in Australia, and has risen for the sixth consecutive quarter to a historical high of 8.8 per cent," Mr Hockman said.

The trend underutilisation rate, which includes both unemployment and underemployment, remained at 14.5 per cent in May 2017.

Trend series smooth the more volatile seasonally adjusted estimates and provide the best measure of the underlying behaviour of the labour market.

The seasonally adjusted number of persons employed increased by 42,000 in May 2017. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased by 0.2 percentage points to 5.5 per cent, and the seasonally adjusted labour force participation rate increased slightly to 64.9 per cent.

"The trend unemployment rate has been relatively stable over the past 18 months, at around 5.7 to 5.8 per cent, while the seasonally adjusted rate has also been relatively constrained, between 5.5 and 6.0 per cent," Mr Hockman said.

More details are in the May 2017 issue of Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0). In addition, further information, including regional labour market information, can be found in the upcoming May 2017 issue of Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery (cat. no.

6291.0.55.001), due for release on 22 June 2017. Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003), which includes employment by industry, is also due for release on 22 June.

These publications are available for free download (after release) from the ABS website: https://www.abs.gov.au.

Media note:

- When reporting ABS data, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or ABS) must be attributed as the source.
- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Communications Section on 1300 175 070 (8.30am - 5pm Mon-Fri).
- The ABS produces trend estimates to provide a more reliable indicator of the underlying behaviour of the Labour Force series. Trend estimates were introduced into the Labour Force series in the mid 1980s and are available back to February 1978. Trend estimates are considered the best indicators of the underlying behaviour in the labour market. See paragraphs 28 to 37 of the Explanatory Notes in Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).
- In simple terms, the ABS defines ‘unemployment’ as persons who are not working, are actively looking for work and available to start work in the survey reference week. ‘Underemployment’ refers to people who are working but would like to be working more hours. ‘Underutilisation’ refers to the combined unemployed and underemployed populations. Information on other related groups (eg. ‘marginally attached’ people) can be found in Participation, Job Search and Mobility (cat. no. 6226.0), available annually in respect of February.
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